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SHOOTING REMINISCENCES IN MANITOBA

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EVER since I was a lad of five I was crazy for a gun or pistol. My people in Athboy, County Meath, Ireland, had a big deal box full of blunderbusses and flint locks and I used to spend most of my day gloating over these treasures and longing for the day when I should have my first gun. Although I am an old man now I am just as keen as ever to get out for a few days chicken and duck shooting. My dreams in old Ireland of Hudson Bay, Ungava and Fort Garry, all in the great lone land, have all come true, for if there is any truth in the saying that we were on this earth in some shape or form hundreds of years ago, I feel quite satisfied that I must have been a walrus or polar bear, for even after forty-seven years in Manitoba any picture or story of the frozen north makes my blood boil with joy.

I will never forget the first spring I arrived in the country. The winter was on its last legs and the birds beginning to arrive from the far south, geese, ducks and swans in millions, and when I say millions I mean it. I have seen ploughed fields of 300 acres or more completely covered with White Geese, Waveys, as they are called here from the Indian name "WA WA," which means white goose—Canada Geese, Brants, Bernies, Wild Swans, and every variety of Wild Ducks, all making for the Arctic Circle, their summer home. But did not we take toll of them! One hundred geese was considered a fair morning's bag. The spring ducks we did not molest much as they breed all around us, but the geese only stop for a drink and a feed, and curious to say, their line of flight is not the same in the fall as it is in the spring. The expression "cute as a fox" is all wet. It should be "cute as a goose," for there is no cuter animal in the world. But, with patience and perseverance, you can get them even now, although they are as plentiful as ever, they fly higher and their line of flight may be anywhere; 300 or 400 miles is nothing to them in this big country. At the present time their line of flight is right in Winnipeg, you may say less than ten miles from the centre of the City, the famous Blue Goose mostly, and it is only in the last couple of years that their nesting ground has been discovered at Coronation Gulf in the Arctic Circle.

They are now protected in the spring. For the life of me I can't see why, for they don't come back in the open fall season on this course, but about 1,000 miles to the east of us, close to the Atlantic Coast, so it means that they are breeding here and we are protecting them all summer for our neighbors in the Southern States to shoot in thousands. Game protection is all very well, but this is rotten legislation.

Duck shooting is a different matter, for we have them with us until freezeup.

Some freak shots I have had at geese are worth recording. One morning a friend and I were down the river flats and I spied two geese on the skyline 700 yards away. Luckily I had a rifle and some soft-nose

bullets that I had been using in the winter for moose, so I let fly and to my astonishment one goose rolled over. My friend said, "He won't be worth picking up after the soft nose," but on walking up to him I discovered I had just sliced off the top of his head and no harm done to anyone. I told a friend about this long shot, and he asked me if I had aimed at his head.

On another occasion, while driving across the prairie, I spotted a flock of geese making straight for us, but as we were in the open I handed the reins to my friend and told him to gallop to the nearest cover, a small bluff. Just before we got to shelter the flock saw us and turned away, but for some reason one came on. The horse was at full gallop. I slipped a shell in the gun and put up the gun with one hand. Down Mr. Goose tumbled and struck the saddle on the horse and split in two. If he had hit the horse fair he would have nearly killed him.

Two geese at over ninety yards with a twelve bore and B.B. shot was a shot; I just managed to tip the point of the wing of each, and away they went for shore. I said to my wife, who was with me, "I will run around the pond and head them off." My wife said, "Did you ever see a goose run?" I said, "No," and she said, "You will be surprised." I said, "Did you ever see me run?" She answered "No," then I said, "Then you and the goose will both be surprised." Did any reader ever chase a wounded goose? If so, they will understand what I mean, for they sure can run.

This is a sportsman's paradise for ducks. Some years ago, on October 20, I called up my friend and suggested that as it was the last day of Prairie Chicken shooting that we go out and try to pick up a few birds. The weather was terribly cold; thermometer stood at zero and there was a howling wind; needless to say, we could not get within a mile of a chicken. So my friend said that we had better leave the chicken alone and try to pick up a few duck, if they had not all left for the south. When we got to the duck ponds they were all frozen over, but in one pond the muskrats had an open runway to their den far out in the lake, and sitting round this runway were thousands of duck (all Mallard) trying to get a drink before striking for warmer climates. There happened to be some cover around the lake, so my friend and I crawled up within thirty yards of the ducks and gave them one barrel on the ice and one as they rose. We killed twenty-seven ducks with the four barrels, and with the aid of a good dog five more on land. When we had driven the ducks away we knew that probably they would return as there was no open water anywhere else. Not having decoys, we conceived the plan of using large stones about the size of a mallard. We slid about sixty along the ice, and I never saw such decoys in my life. The ducks evidently thought they were the real thing, for presently out of the sky it rained ducks in twos, threes, and dozens, straight down to the decoys. We shot till our guns were red hot, so we thought it a good opportunity to lay them down and have a bite of lunch; and bite was right. We would take a mouthful and grab the guns and shoot. In fact in the excitement and hurry my friend nearly bit a cartridge

in two instead of a sandwich. At 5 p.m., when it was just getting dusk, we had 197 big Mallards weighing 4-lb. apiece, and some 4 lbs. 8 ozs. The Mallard are very big here, as they are mostly barley-fed birds. Ducks in this country will not go to wheat or oats if there is any barley in the country. We had clean run out of cartridges, but I happened to have one that had missed fire three times. I thought I would give it one more try, so I waited until a great big greenhead lighted within ten yards of me, and then let go. To my astonishment the cartridge went off and blew the duck's head clean across the ice. We were a long way from our little town, fourteen miles, so we took the blanket off the pony, hitched him up to the buggy, loaded our ducks in the small buggy the best we could; even the seat was piled high with birds, so we had a soft cushion to rest on. We both took a pull at our bottle of Scotch, about five ounces each, and away for home and mother as fast as the pony could travel. We had no heavy coats, nothing but our shooting clothes, and believe me we were cold and hungry and tired. That fourteen miles seemed like a hundred, and we were mighty glad to see the lights of our little town, and after another "snort" to sit down to a hot dinner of roast prairie chicken, bread sauce and bread crumbs. Our troubles were soon forgotten. That week, in spite of the snow and ice, my friend and I bagged over 800 Mallards.

Every species in the world are represented here, Canvas Backs, Red Heads, Widgeon Pintails, Mallards, Wood Ducks, Teals, Black Mallards (a very fine duck), Scoters, Mergansers, Bald Pates, Blue Bills, Golden Eyes, etc., and owing to abundance of the best of feed nearly all edible. The finest duck, in my opinion, is a barley-fed Mallard, and as there are thousands of acres of barley stubble the feed is more than plentiful, and a good fat Mallard will weigh $4\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. No other duck will feed on stubble except occasionally a Pintail. I have seen a thousand or more Mallards feeding on a small barley stubble, and, Oh Boy! if you can get into a hide before they start coming it is only a question of how many cartridges you have. Just before dusk you will see them wheeling over the stubble in droves, and this is the time to touch the high spots and get there as fast as you can. Fifty is a good evening's shoot, but the writer has shot as many as 200 in an afternoon, between pond and stubble. Lucky you are if there are some stooks in the field, but failing this, dig a deep trench and lie in it. I am not in favour of decoys very much. If the ducks are feeding on this particular stubble they will light anyway, and if not, all the decoys in the world will not bring them. Windy days for ducks or moose is a sportsman's delight. One occasion five Teal flew past me, going about 100 miles an hour. I thought sure I would get a couple, but I killed three with the first barrel and two with the second. I was just as much surprised as the Teal.

On another occasion, while hiding in some bushes at the end of a pond, I killed a Mallard, a Teal, a Spoonbill, a Grouse, a Prairie Chicken and a Partridge. Can anyone beat that for a mixed bag without moving one foot before the other. All these ducks of course, leave us at freezeup for the Gulf of Mexico, etc., same as all the song birds, and it is wonderful to

think that these birds will fly from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Circle and land not more than fifty yards from where they were in the previous summer. This has been proved time and again with the song birds especially. Look up your map and measure the distance from the Gulf to the Arctic Circle.

The common Snipe is very plentiful wherever there is any marshy land, and within five miles of Winnipeg hundreds could be shot in a day, but now owing to so much drainage you have to go further afield. Owing to the abundance of feed they are sluggish and fat and do not give you the sporting shot they do, in the old country. These birds are commonly called Jack Snipe here, but anyone who has ever seen a Jack in Ireland or elsewhere would know this is all wet. There is not a Jack in Western Canada.

I have shot a lot of them in my day, but in these days people are not prepared for Snipe, they generally have No. 4 shot for ducks. The writer struck a small marsh one day and it was teeming with Snipe, had nothing but No. 4, but I managed to bag thirteen Snipe with fifteen cartridges. I still would run a mile to get a shot at Snipe. Reminds me of a very amorous man who used to say he would run ten miles to kiss a red-headed woman.

It is not generally known that Woodcock have been seen and shot in Manitoba. Mr. James Simpson, of Rapid City, shot two on the Red River near Elm Park. I think it was in the year 1882. He sold them to Hine, the Taxidermist, who mounted them, and for years afterwards they were on exhibition in the City. I remember seeing these birds in the old Clarendon more than forty years ago. Someone shot one at the mouth of the Red River over twenty years ago; I used to remember who shot it but it has slipped my memory. There is no reason why Woodcock should not be here, for it is not so far to Ontario and Nova Scotia where they abound, especially when you come to think of these birds flying hundreds of miles across the sea, from Norway, Egypt, etc., over to England, Ireland and Scotland. The female bird carries its young between its claws and close to its breast, and will fly hundreds of miles in this way. They are, of course, migratory and although very plentiful in Ireland and parts of England very few of them nest there. Golden Plover or, as the Americans call them, Black Bellied Plover, were very plentiful in the Province fifty years ago. Then they disappeared for nearly fifteen years. One morning, about the year 1899, my shooting friend, James Simpson, and I were down the river flats near Rapid City. We were after geese. I happened to ask him if he had ever seen or shot Golden Plover in Manitoba. He said he had shot lots of them but had not seen any for years and added that at this time of year, spring, if there were any you would most likely see them on a ploughed field. Just as he said that I happened to look at a piece of ploughing and there were over a hundred Plover running around. The following fall and for three years afterward there were all kinds of them, but now they seem to have disappeared again. They are delicious

eating and as fat as butter. The adult birds in spring are black and white, but the juveniles in the fall are a beautiful golden yellow.

The Upland Plover were here in millions thirty years ago, mostly along the river flats and open prairie. Today you could drive all day and not see a half a dozen. Very few people knew their worth as a table delicacy, consequently very few were shot, but they are now practically extinct, but not from shooting, in Manitoba, anyway.

Curlews, a very highly prized bird in the Old Country, have been occasionally seen in this Province, but I have never known one to be shot. The American name for them is Marbled Godwit. There are five species of grouse in Manitoba, viz.: Prairie Chicken (otherwise known as Sharptails), Pinnated Grouse, Spruce Partridge, Ruffed Grouse and the Ptarmigan; but the king bird of them all is the Prairie Chicken, both from a shooting point of view and culinary purposes, and there is only one way to cook them. A fresh killed bird should be hung for at least two days, then plucked, singed and drawn, cover with a few strips of bacon and roast in a good hot oven for forty minutes, no longer. Serve with bread crumbs and bread sauce and you have a bird fit for a king. I have shot and given away a lot of birds in my lifetime, but I never want to give away another when I hear the following: "We enjoyed your chicken so much, *it tasted just like domestic chicken*, and we were careful to skin the bird and steeped it all night in salt and water to take away the gamey taste." Why should you want to take away the gamey taste from one of the finest game birds in the world? Six out of ten people treat the wild ducks in the same way.

In years gone by when the chicken season opened at the proper time, September, the sport was magnificent, as then they would lie to a good dog and it was a pleasure to own and break a good setter and pointer, but now, owing to the lateness of the season, October 15th or later, a setter or pointer is of no assistance to you. In the old days it was a sight for sore eyes to see our beautiful shooting dogs, but now you might as well have a jack rabbit.

The trouble with the game laws in this country is that they are framed by men who sit at their desks in their office from one year's end to another, and having lived in a city all their lives are not competent to frame game laws. A natural born sport who has lived among the birds, beasts and flowers all his life is the one best able to judge, not a politician. All that is necessary as far as I can see, to be an expert authority on game laws, is to be a good shot at clay pigeons. It reminds me of when I was a schoolboy in Ireland and the proud possessor of a Saloon pistol. This gun was a little the worse of wear and would shoot around a corner, but with constant practice and holding it high and to the right I could hit within a yard of the target. One day a cousin of mine, who had just been gazetted to the Royal Engineers, came to see us. He, being in the Army, I thought must be a crack shot, so I asked him to try out my pistol. To my utter disgust he did not even hit the target. This destroyed my

faith in soldiers, for I thought that a Lieutenant must be good, a Captain better, a Major better still, and a General the best shot in the Army.

I think the Prairie Chicken is the fastest flying bird of the grouse family, and takes some killing, being very heavily feathered, and I have always found that No. 4 shot is the best especially as our season is so late. The best chicken shots I have seen were fellows from the Old Country, who were used to shooting Grouse, Snipe, etc., but when they switched over to duck shooting, Oh, Boy! nothing doing, and they wondered why. Any of you wildfowlers will understand this, as duck shooting, like snipe, is an art and nothing but constant practice will get you anywhere.

We now have with us the Hungarian Partridge and they are, I think, multiplying very fast and seem wonderfully adapted to our cold winters. Even this winter, the coldest we have had for forty years, they are coming out very well, but like the Old Country, they need looking after in the deep snow, and I am glad to say the farmers are taking a great interest in them and scattering feed around their farm yards.

There are lots of places in this country where the English Pheasant will do well, and that is in our spruce and pine woods, which are generally sandy and afford lots of shelter, but I doubt very much if they will amount to anything on the bare prairie. However, it remains to be seen.

This would be an ideal country for Black Cock and Capercailzie. The Jack Rabbit, or Arctic Hare, is becoming so numerous it is a pity. It is not at the present time fit for food, for the last twenty-five years they have been afflicted with blisters and worms and there seems no remedy. They used to say that the rabbits got this disease every seven years and it then died. This is all rot. It has not died out. A Jack Rabbit in his prime is just as good as a Hare, exactly the same flavour, and it seems a shame in these hard times that they cannot be used more. Lots of people eat them even now, but I think they are taking risks.

Jumping Deer, and when I say Jumping Deer I mean Black Tail, White Tail, Mule Deer and the so-called Red Deer of Northern Ontario. They all must be first cousins to the Hare, for their habits are exactly similar. Feed at night, lie down for the day at early dawn, and when they start out on a runway they will nearly always double back on the same trail. This I know to my sorrow, for time and again while hunting alone, and after following them for miles, they have eluded me and doubled back on the very same tracks to where I had started him. This reminds me, one morning I started out with a companion in search of the wily Jumper. We had not gone very far when we struck a track, near a spring, of a great big buck. I had done a good deal more hunting than my companion, and I sure wanted that buck, so I suggested that he camp right where he was and not to move until I got back, for I felt quite certain the buck would double and end up at the spring again. So I started off on a long weary hike, nose to the ground. I followed him for miles and just as I was prepared to turn back, as I could see he was going to play me out, he

doubled without my getting a shot at him. However, I was gratified to see he was heading right back on his tracks and felt quite satisfied that my companion would nail him. I began to listen for a shot, but nothing doing. When I got about 300 yards from our starting-off place I saw Mr. Buck nearly clean played out, and he passed in the exact spot where I had left my friend. No shot and no sign of my boy friend, so I lost my deer. Imagine my state of mind, (Deer shooters attention)! Weary, sore and sad I made for home, there to find my boy friend ~~in the bar with one foot on the rail, having a hell of a good time!~~ It took me about six drinks before I could express myself in the way I wanted, and the answer was, "I got so tired, hungry and cold I thought you were not coming." Why don't you ask me if I ever went shooting with this guy again?

Any old hunter will tell you if a man is in good condition he can play a Jumper out in a day. I did it once but I would not want to try it again.

I drove out from our town one morning, and had not gone more than three miles when I noticed a track of a large Jumper going up a ravine, which was no place to take a horse, so I tied up the horse, gave him a sheaf of oats and away with me. This was about seven in the morning. I followed the tracks up hill and down dale hour after hour. The buck would run like hell from bluff to bluff, stop for a minute to see if I was coming and then away with him again. About 2 p.m. I was getting pretty tired, but noticed Mr. Buck did not like it either, for he was commencing to drag his feet and sidestep. I kept plugging along and at last came to the end of his tracks. The beggar had doubled back, putting his feet exactly in the same tracks as going out. I came to a small wood and noticed that he had made for this. Instead of following him in I made a detour of nearly half a mile and approached the bluff from upwind. He did not see or hear me, and there he was lying down. It was the work of a moment to let drive at him, and he never rose again. I had got him clean through the backbone and paralyzed him. What joy, and did I not take a long and strong pull from my flask. This was about 3 p.m., and nine miles from my horse. I made it, but that was about all. From 7 in the morning to 5.30 in the evening without stopping was some walk. Next morning I got a livery team and sleigh and brought in Mr. Buck, so you see it can be done, and I was not a very young man either.

Moose and Elk are very different in their habits from a Jumper. When you jump a Moose or Elk they are away, hell for leather, no stopping to look around to see if you are coming, and a Moose has been known to run twenty miles without a breather.

When the wind is blowing a gale and you can't hear yourself talk for the creaking of the treetops, there will be good hunting. I well remember a morning like this many years ago in the Riding Mountains. My companion and I started off at daylight, and we had not got half a mile from camp when we struck the tracks of seven Moose. By the look of the slot,

all bulls. We divided, my friend taking the ridge and I followed up the ravine. Had not been out two hours and while taking a rest and a snort, I heard thud, thud, thud, coming towards me. At first I thought it was my friend, but presently I saw the greatest sight I ever saw in my life, the seven bulls walked out in a small opening not forty yards from me. It was the work of a second to train *Fatal Bess* on the leading bull. *Fatal Bess*, by the way, was an old-fashioned long-barrel Lee Enfield 303, ten shots. I dropped the first bull dead as a door nail with a neck shot. The second tumbled head over heels over the first, and by the time he got on his feet I had him down and dead. The rest of them started to bump into each other, and by the way of saying good-by I knocked a third one over. Three bulls in less than five minutes was not bad shooting. It is not done now. All this in stormy weather. I always found the best way to shoot Elk or Moose was to let them come to you, but if you must follow their tracks, circle about every mile. On another occasion and a stormy morning I walked right on top of a big Crown Moose. She was lying down in the scrub not more than ten yards from me. It did not take her long to jump and run straight away from me. I could only take a rump shot, hoping I would drive the bullet clean through her, but I must have struck a bone for it did not stop her, but glory be, she was spraying the bushes and snow with her bloody gore. I followed her for nearly ten miles. By this time it was twilight in the bush, and if I did not want to camp out all night I thought I had better make back to camp. Next morning was Sunday so I did not take any gun with me, but went out to find her. I followed her nearly all day. She had tumbled down repeatedly, so I felt satisfied that she was my meat. At last I came on her lying down in part of an old lumberman's shack. She was still able to get up but could not run. However, she could travel faster than I could and I never got her. Sunday or no Sunday, if I ever had a wounded deer in the bush I would feel it my duty to have my gun, if it was only for the reason of putting it out of misery. Stories of wounded Moose going for you is all bull; as long as a Moose has a breath in his body he will run. I have walked up to dozens of wounded Moose and never yet had one turn on me.

For eating purposes the Cow Moose is far the best. After a bull gets to be four years old I think the meat is worthless. Heads are of no value any more. Why bar Cow Moose shooting? There are ten cows to one bull, and I think there is hardly a real good head left in the Riding Mountains.

It was the first day of Deer shooting but as there was so little snow I had about decided not to go out, but by the afternoon I could not stand it any longer, so I said to my wife: "Let's take the pony and buggy and take a drive through the wood lots," which are only four miles from our town. We struck an old wood trail, and after following it for a few miles we decided that there was nothing doing and turned for home; just then I happened to look up and there about 150 yards away was a great big Jumping Deer buck standing watching us. The pony was trotting slowly and I threw the reins to my wife and made a grab for my rifle. When my

wife saw what I was up to she started to climb out of the buggy as she was a little nervous, but before she reached the ground I let go at the buck and away he went about 100 miles per hour. My wife said, "It is too bad you missed him." I was not so sure of that and went over to where the buck had been standing. No sign of blood, but as there was just a little snow here and there I was able to make out his tracks here and again. I followed him for about 200 yards, and there he was dead as a door nail. I had shot him clean through the heart, and after a heart shot, as a rule, a Deer will bunch himself together and off like the wind. My wife and I lifted the Deer into the buggy, rump to the front and head hanging over the back. My wife climbed into the buggy and sat on the deer, while I walked behind. When we arrived home it took two men to get him out of the buggy, and how in thunder my wife and I ever loaded him is a mystery to this day. The buck dressed over 200 pounds.

When out Chicken shooting I made an extraordinary shot. My dog was on one side of a bluff and drove a covey of Chicken towards me. There were twelve in the covey. I did not brown them, picked the leading bird and got five with the first barrel and three with the second.

On a certain moor in Scotland, Deer stalkers were pestered by old Grouse flushing just as they were getting in range of a Deer, consequently no shot. They complained very bitterly to the Game Commission as to what steps to take. The answer was—leave the Grouse alone, they will exterminate themselves in a very short time. This goes to show that the more birds shot in the fall, the more next year. No shooting will lessen the Chicken. Grouse disease and an unfavourable season will. This happened in 1895, and will happen again if the birds are allowed to get too plentiful.

To young shooters—get your experience in the field. Trap shooting will not get you anywhere. Try and get a gun to fit you. Very often a poor shot develops into a fairly good shot by having a well-fitting gun. In all cases use a standard load shell for the ordinary 12 bore. So-called heavy load and long range shells are only suited to an extra heavy gun, and who wants a heavy gun anyway.

According to the "*Shooting Times*" of London, England, 30-inch barrels are now obsolete, 25 to 28-inch barrels are recommended by all the leading gunmakers in the Old Country.

A crusty old British General was out with a shooting party. He was a rotten shot and to make it worse, was dangerous. He fired wildly at a rising Woodcock and peppered one of the gamekeepers. The keeper said, "Oh, Sir, you have hit me in the head." The General retorted, "Why the hell don't you Tower?" Readers who have seen a Towering Chicken will understand this.

As an instance of perfect teamwork and good shooting, the following is worth recording. Lord Walsingham and Sir Ralph Payne-Galwey, out

Partridge shooting, had a covey of eight Partridges driven over them. They each had two guns and of course their loaders. They fired four shots each, and both accounted for four birds each.

Elk are the hardest of the Deer family to kill outright. I remember on one occasion I got a beautiful standing shot at a big bull. He could not have been more than 100 yards from me. I was using an old Winchester 44, fifteen shots. I opened the battle, shot after shot, but he never moved except once in a while I could see him flick his ears. My companion who was with me was laughing his head off, thinking I had buck fever. All of a sudden Mr. Bull started off at about 100 miles per hour heading for a big ravine. I walked over to where he had been standing and noticed just a tiny speck of blood, so I took up his trail and after going for about a quarter of a mile I saw him standing at the bottom of the ravine, looking pretty sick. He was nearly 300 yards away, a down shot, but I had the luck to get him right through the backbone. That settled him. On skinning him I found I had hit him eleven times, and nearly every shot would have been fatal in time. Once I killed an Elk with one shot, and he never moved from where he was standing. I had been hunting since early dawn, never got a shot all day. Just about dusk, coming through a tamarac swamp, not more than fifty yards from the camp, a big bull walked out of the swamp and stood over our water hole where we filled our kettles. He never saw me, and I was only about fifteen yards from him. I let drive at him and he crashed into the water hole and broke the ice.

Oldtimers tell me that sixty years ago there were no Elk or Moose in the Riding Mountains and that they have gradually worked their way west from the Maritime Provinces. The Riding Mountains and part of British Columbia are the only places there are Elk today in a wild state. Foxes and Wolves abounded on the prairie in the old days, but owing to trapping, poison and hounds they are very nearly extinct in Manitoba, especially Foxes. At my old home, the Heard Settlement, north of Brandon, we had a magnificent pack of fox hounds, and I hunted with my old friend Captain Henry Toke Munn, who at that time was one of the young bachelors in our settlement. We were all young, raring to go, well supplied with hunters, as we called them, in those days, but in reality Shaganappis and cow ponies. The fun we used to have. All summer we would get up at 3 a.m., when the dew was on the grass and the only time there would be any scent. We did not forget to carry a little Mountain Dew on our hips, and when the hounds got on the scent of a Wolf or Fox, away we went, hell for leather. That part of the country was honey-combed with large gopher and badger holes, and many a tumble we got, but who cared? In about ten years we practically cleaned up that part of Manitoba of all vermin.

Talking about Foxes reminds me of my first Fox hunt. I was staying with some friends at Whitewood, Saskatchewan, and I used to amuse myself in setting traps for Foxes. One morning I was riding around on my pony and I was armed with a double-barrel muzzle loader, when presently

I spied a Fox in one of my traps. The Fox tugged so hard to get away that he broke his leg off and away with him. I jumped on my pony and after him, both barrels of the gun cocked. The Fox could just run fast enough to keep about 100 yards ahead of me. I imagined myself a buffalo runner and let loose both barrels of the gun, too far away, of course, and just as I fired the pony put his foot in a badger hole and over we went. Luckily the gun was unloaded or I might not be here today to tell this story. Strange to relate, while I was writing this in Winnipeg, Captain Munn arrived on a visit. For the last thirty years he has been exploring and trapping in the Arctic and Barren Lands, and he is about the only man left of our old settlement in Canada today.

For fifteen years I was Police Magistrate in a Western town, and among the interesting cases I had was one connected with Deer shooting. It is an unwritten law that if two or more go together hunting it is fifty-fifty in everything, last crust of bread, last pipe of tobacco and last drink, if any, and of course, an equal division of all game shot. One time two of our local hunters started off to the Riding Mountains, and going through Erickson they picked up two Swedes. On the first morning out the local boys wounded an Elk, not badly. The Elk ran right by the two Swedes, who were some distance ahead. They killed it, and between the four of them got the carcass back to camp. Next day, while the Swedes were out hunting the local boys hitched up their sleigh, etc., and made for home sixty miles away. The Swedes cottoned to what happened and drove all the way to the boys' home, and as soon as it was dark swiped the whole carcass and away with them. The boys came to town and laid information with me against the Swedes. My being an old hunter, everyone for miles around came to Court to see how I would handle the case. My decision was this—I made the boys reimburse the Swedes for loss of time coming after their share of the meat. I fined the Swedes costs of the Court for taking away all the carcass, and made the Swedes return half the Deer. The decision seemed to meet with general approval. Fellow hunters, did I do wrong?

Reminds me of a story—a young girl was having some heart to heart talks with the editor. She wrote as follows:

"The other night I went out to dinner with a gentleman friend. Before dinner I had three cocktails, and during dinner I had a bottle of champagne. *Did I do wrong?*"

The editor answered back, "*Probably.*"

Some years ago I was out Chicken shooting with the late Senator Kirchoffer, of Brandon, and Sir Henry Pellat, of Toronto. Coming home in the evening we took a short cut through a blind road and came to a willow pot hole with about three feet of mud and water. The driver, in spite of my warning him, thought he would take a chance and drove the horses right in. In a second both horses were down, and owing to the

harness nearly drowning; I jumped out of the democrat, clothes and all, and managed to unhitch the horses. Away they went for shore, leaving me standing in the water and Sir Henry and Senator Kirchoffer sitting in the rig. Sir Henry called out, "What will we do?" So I backed up to the rig, took Sir Henry on my back and plunged for dry land. I got there all right. I then took the Senator. Sir Henry weighed about 225 pounds. The Senator 200 pounds. You never know what you can do until you try. I weighed only 140 pounds. The only thing I regret is that there was no one there with a camera. What a picture! If this should ever meet the eye of Sir Henry I hope he will tell you it is true.

I have had some famous setters and retrievers in my time. One in particular was an Irish setter bitch I brought out from Ireland in 1891. Being trained in Ireland she hated ranging from a rig, but once you got out she was a marvel. She would find and hold a bird for you all day. On one occasion my brother-in-law, the late Gosset-Jackson and I were Chicken shooting. We missed the dog. Just then we spied a farmer friend on his binder and I, forgetting all about the dog, suggested we go over and give our friend the glad hand and a drink. We stayed talking for over half an hour and suddenly remembered that we had left the setter about a mile away. We got back but no sign of the dog, so I walked into a small bluff and here was the dog lying down flat, surrounded by a covey of chicken. She had held them there for nearly three quarters of an hour.

I had an English retriever bitch, and she was without doubt one of the most perfect working dogs in Canada. I must have shot over 5,000 ducks while I had her, and I am quite sure I did not loose 100 birds. Lots of times, not knowingly I have wounded ducks flying by, but she did not make any mistake. She knew if I hit them. On numerous occasions she would streak away across the prairie and back; she would come with a wounded bird. One afternoon I went out to pick up a few birds. I wounded two Spoonbills in a slough. Betty went after one but before she could grab it, it dived and stayed under water. All of a sudden I saw the bitch dive. There was not a ripple on the surface, and she stayed under for over a minute. I called out to my companion that the bitch was drowned, but just as I said this, up she came with Mr. Spoonbill. The other duck did exactly the same thing, and down went Betty and got him.

Going through some heavy scrub I lost my pipe. It was lighted and I could not find it anywhere. My friend suggested to try the bitch. I sent her in, and in a few minutes I heard her yelling her head off. You would think she had treed a Partridge. There she was standing over my pipe and trying to pick it up. The pipe was still hot and smoking.

Betty had one fault, and only one—she could not resist having a rabbit hunt, and sometime when I wanted her most she would be in a bluff. I tried everything to break her of the habit, even tying an old dead rabbit around her neck. All of no avail; but very accidentally I solved the problem. My boys got some tame rabbits and had them in a cage on the

lawn, wire-netting front. For days Betty would sit and watch these rabbits, and every time I caught her with her nose too close to the wire I would remonstrate with her. In the course of time we let the bunnies loose on the lawn and they would come up and rub noses with Betty. She never tried to hunt rabbits again, at least not while I had her. I sold her to a man in Windermere, B.C., and after a year I had a letter from him saying that Betty was a wonder, but rather inclined to chase rabbits.

A couple of fellows who lived in our prairie town moved to Brandon. They came up one day for a Chicken shoot, but had no dog. They knew the country well and every farmer for miles around. They got back in the evening with a fairly good bag, and just before supper they invited me to the hotel to have a couple of quick ones. When John Barleycorn started to work they got confidential and started to tell me what a trick they played on a farmer. They said it was this way, Dinny (my name is Denis), we had no dog but knew that Mr. so and so had a good one and that the dog would follow anyone if they had a gun, so we drove near the farm and fired several shots in the air, and it was not long before Mr. Dog came along and helped the sport considerably. This, of course, was told me not as a secret but a huge joke. It was not so much of a joke after all, for on Monday morning the owner of the dog came into town and laid information with me as Police Magistrate that these men had stolen their dog. The boys swore positively that they had not stolen the dog, but as they happened to pass by the farm they shot a chicken or two and as soon as the dog heard the shot they could not drive him home. The evidence was two to one, so I dismissed the case.

To illustrate my point, about 100 years ago in Ireland a man went to confession and told the priest that he had murdered the priest's brother. The priest, of course, was horrified but under the seal of confession he could not say anything. After twenty years the priest and this man were riding home from the Fair through a wood and the man said, "Father, when I killed your brother I buried him under that oak tree there." The priest made a grab at him and said, "The Lord be praised, I have got you at last," and had him convicted and hung.

Did any of my readers ever use a Wild Hawk for a retriever? I did once, with great success. Betty, my dog, was home looking after her pups, and while strolling around I shot a big Mallard. He dropped in the middle of a deep slough and I thought for sure I had lost him, but I happened to notice a hawk hovering around and felt quite sure he had seen my duck, so I sneaked in to the bushes and presently I saw Mr. Hawk make a dive at the duck and carry him to shore, and just as he was getting in his first bite I shot him and picked up my bird without getting my feet wet. Nothing like using your head at the critical moment.

One bitter cold day, zero, and blowing a gale, and just before the ducks left for the south a friend and I got four barrels into a flock of ducks sitting on the ice opposite an open muskrat run. We killed twenty-seven. We sent the dog up the runway and she retrieved eleven, but she got so

cold she would not go in any more. My friend said, "It is too bad to leave all those lovely ducks there." I heard him the first time, and without a word, took all my clothes off and wrapped my shirt round my neck and waded in, and, breaking the ice before me, I got them all. The only thing I had to dry myself with was the buggy robe. It did not take me long to get into my clothes, and it did not take me long to drink nearly a half pint of Scotch. Everything was jake when I got home, but just as I was hopping or rolling into bed, my wife said, "What is the matter, you are cut to pieces?" The sharp edges of the ice had cut me from my toes to my chest, just as if I had been slashed with a razor.

A few years ago, five I think it was, I took the midnight train to Basswood for my usual fall duck shoot. I thought to myself, I will get a good night's rest on the train and I will be ready for a good day's shoot. Thinking of the day ahead I did not sleep a wink and arrived in Basswood at 4 a.m. Had to wait in the station until 7. By this time I was nearly all in for want of sleep, but at last my friend turned up to take me to his farm. He remarked that I looked very tired and I had better rest up until the afternoon anyway, but after a big breakfast and a big drink I felt ready for anything. Having no rig I started off to hunt and stayed out until nearly 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Not bad for a man nearly sixty-three years of age.

I have had just what I wanted as a child—a happy sporting life, and like the story—a girl went to the priest and confessed that she had been rather indiscreet. About two years after she went to confession again and started to tell the priest what she had told him before, but he said, "Why Mary, you told me this two years ago." She said, "I know, Father, but I like to talk about it."

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